



U.S. Department of Justice

**Ronald C. Machen Jr.**  
*United States Attorney for the  
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center  
555 Fourth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **For Information Contact:**

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(202) 252-6933

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### **District Man Sentenced to 40 Years in Prison For Fatal Stabbing in Premeditated Attack - Stormed Into Victim's Apartment, Stabbing Him At Least 18 Times -**

WASHINGTON – Justin L. Navarro, 26, was sentenced today to 40 years in prison on charges stemming from the fatal stabbing of a Northwest Washington man during an attack at the victim's apartment in November 2009, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Navarro, also known as "Fool," was convicted by a jury in March 2011 of charges of first degree murder while armed, obstruction of justice, tampering with evidence, and carrying a dangerous weapon. He was sentenced in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia by the Honorable Lynn Leibovitz, who presided at the trial.

The U.S. Attorney's Office had charged Navarro with committing this murder because of Mr. Massey's sexual orientation, but the jury did not make that finding beyond a reasonable doubt. In sentencing papers, the U.S. Attorney's Office cited evidence that the killing would not have taken place except for the fact that the victim, 31-year-old Kevin Massey, was gay. In announcing the sentence, Judge Leibovitz said that this was "a senseless and brutal murder."

According to the evidence elicited at trial, the murder stemmed from an incident that took place about a month beforehand. On that date, Navarro was so high on PCP that he had to be carried out of an apartment building in the 4200 block of Second Street NW - the same building in which the victim resided. Teenagers began laughing at Navarro, particularly when his loose pants began to fall down, exposing his backside. According to a witness, Massey leaned over to pull up the defendant's pants for him. In response to this act, the teenagers began teasing Navarro by saying that Massey was going to make the defendant "his next bitch." The defendant then turned towards Massey and angrily gave him the "evil eye."

During the month that followed, Navarro was the target of rumors about his sexual orientation. On one occasion, he was heard loudly denying these rumors and vowing to kill

Massey. On another occasion, Navarro called a relative and asked her to beat an acquaintance whom he believed was spreading these rumors.

Finally, on November 6, 2009, Navarro knocked on the door of Massey's apartment and asked, "Where's the faggot?" After being told that Massey was in the bedroom, the defendant went into the kitchen, opened a silverware drawer, and grabbed a large butcher knife.

Navarro then went into the victim's bedroom, and, without any warning, and entirely unprovoked, stabbed Massey repeatedly. Massey died on the scene, and a later autopsy revealed that he was stabbed between 18 and 20 times - including 15 times in the back.

In the days that followed, the defendant threatened witnesses, burned his clothes, and told relatives he would not be around for awhile. Five days after the murder, the Capital Area Regional Fugitive Task Force arrested the defendant in a hotel room in Southwest Washington.

Incredibly, at trial, the defendant testified that he acted in self-defense. Navarro testified that he did not know the victim, and that Massey attacked him for no apparent reason. The defendant testified that he believed Massey was either going to kill him or rape him. At sentencing, Judge Leibovitz remarked that she did not believe the defendant's testimony.

In sentencing papers, the U.S. Attorney's Office characterized Navarro's trial testimony as "shameful." His account – which put the blame on a man who actually had only tried to help him – was both "nonsensical and outlandish," the government wrote. In fact, Navarro murdered the victim as revenge for his mistaken belief that Massey had patted him on the backside and to put a stop to rumors questioning his sexuality.

"This brutal stabbing demonstrates how quickly one man's insecurity can lead to terrible violence," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "The 40-year sentence imposed today holds the defendant accountable for a vicious act that robbed a family of a father, brother, and son. The U.S. Attorney's Office will continue the fight to purge our community of this senseless violence."

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen expressed appreciation to the MPD and the Capital Area Regional Fugitive Task Force. He particularly praised the work of Criminal Investigation Division, Homicide Branch Detectives Gus Giannakoulis, Thomas Webb, James Wilson, Joshua Branson, and Norma Horne, Detective Lt. Ozetta Posey, and Mobile Crime Technicians Leather Strong and William Hyatt. U.S. Attorney Machen also commended the work of those who handled the case for the U.S. Attorney's Office. He cited the efforts of Legal Assistant Kelly Blakeney, who helped prepare the case for trial, Litigation Technology Specialists Leif Hickling and Kimberly Smith, who created graphics to illustrate what happened the night of the murder, Intelligence Specialists Lawrence Grasso and Shannon Alexis, and Marcia Rinker and Tanya Via of the Victim Witness Assistance Unit.

Finally, he praised the outstanding work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Sharad S. Khandelwal, who investigated, indicted, and prosecuted the case at trial.

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